LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 13 (Part 1) :1-23

The Parable of the Sower

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Let's read, we're going to read down through the 23rd verse. That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying, a farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up.

Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Several other seed fell on good soil where it produced a crop, 160 or 30 times what was sown.

Whoever has ears let him hear. The disciples came to him and asked, why do you speak to the people in parables? He replied, because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them. Whoever has will be given more and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

That is why I speak to them in parables. Though seeing they do not see, though hearing they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, you will be ever hearing but never understanding. You will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused.

They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them. And blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see but did not see it and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. Listen to what the parable of the sower means. When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.

This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy but since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word making it unfruitful. The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

This is the one who produces a crop yielding 160 or 30 times what was sown. Let's stop there. The parable of the sower before we pray is probably one of the most well-known parables I suppose that Jesus ever gave and the tendency for us is to have heard this so many times that we ourselves can stop listening. Let's just expect this morning that the Lord is going to do a fresh sort of a thing in our hearts as we go through this parable. So let's pray.

Father, God, open our hearts. You know, here we are praying or rather reading about the condition of hearts and the various conditions that provide either a hospitable environment for the seed of your word to grow or an inhospitable one, depending. And here we are, Lord, and we want to be that good soil. We want to see the word take root in our lives. We want to see it grow.

We want to see it bear fruit, Lord. We want you in our lives. We want your word. So we pray that you would do that work in us. Make us hearers and also doers.

Fill us with understanding. Fill us with insight. We want to lay hold of this today. We ask that you would be with us in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen, amen.

In verse 11 here in this passage, Jesus referred to what is contained in this parable as the secrets of the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven. Boy, that sounds pretty cool, doesn't it? Your Bible may say instead of secrets, it may say mysteries if you have a different translation than the one I am reading. I want you to know, though, that the word secrets or mysteries here actually doesn't refer to those things that are mysterious or hard to find. The biblical word refers to something that you and I would have absolutely no knowledge of if God had not come and revealed it.

In other words, it's something that's completely hidden from us unless he would come and speak to us about it. So what is he doing here? You know, what Jesus is doing in this passage, and I'm very thankful that he does it here, is he is telling us, showing us, explaining to us why some people respond differently than others to the gospel. Because you know, there are a myriad of responses. You know, everything from the stone cold, you know, sort of response to an excited response that's kind of like striking a match.

It burns hot and quick and then burns out just as fast. There are various responses, which Jesus kind of outlines here for us. And you know, without this passage, you and I might look at how people respond or how we respond to the gospel or how our children respond to the gospel, and we might sit around scratching our head and kind of wondering, so what exactly happened? I know they heard, but what did they do with what they heard? We have this tendency to think that hearing is enough.

Did you notice in these different soil types that there were two, well, there's three actually soil types that heard, but there are two soil types that heard, but it didn't really benefit them. They heard. They heard the Bible. They heard the scripture. They heard the good news, but it didn't really have a very good effect.

So obviously hearing isn't enough, but see, these are the kind of things that we learn from this passage. It just gives us wonderful insights about what's going on under the surface in the heart condition because there's one thing that you and I can't see in one another, and that's the heart. I can't see your heart. You can't see mine. We can make guesses based on what we're seeing from the outside, but I don't know what's going on in your heart and you don't know what's going on in mine.

Here's the thing though. God knows. God knows what's going on in your heart and he knows what's going on in mine and he can speak of it and he does speak of it in this passage and it gives us wonderful help. So it begins like most parables do with a simple story and parables by the way are almost always very simple. It's a farmer.

That's something that people of that day would have certainly understood. We can understand it too. He goes out to plant his field and he's not a real good planter. They didn't have machines to drop it right in the row. They just scattered their seed and as you can see, this guy is not real discriminating in terms of where the seed necessarily gets scattered and he scatters the seed and it lands ultimately on four different kinds of ground, which we come to understand as Jesus explains the parable to be conditions of the heart that may or may not be conducive to the planting of the seed, which we know is symbolically the word of God.

So that's the picture that we have here. In verse four, if you'll look with me again in your Bible, it says that as he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up and this is obviously the first path that we see here and it has been walked on over and over again to the point now where it is compacted into an ultra-hard surface that more resembles concrete than soil. So there's nowhere for the seed to go. He's scattering seed and he doesn't really mean to throw it on the path necessarily as a farmer would go, but there's nowhere for the seed to go. It just sits on the surface and before long, the birds come and snatch it up.

Then in verse five, we're just reviewing the surfaces here, it says some fell on rocky places where it didn't have much soil and it's spraying up quickly because the soil was shallow, but then when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they didn't have any root. Now don't think about him sowing seeds on rocks. That's not what he's doing. It's not like he sees a rocky area and the seeds go. It's actually rocks beneath the soil is what it is.

It can even refer to a rocky hard surface beneath a very shallow amount or depth of soil. So he sows the seed in such a way that it looks like he's sowing it on good ground, but he hasn't really done any cultivating or plowing in that area to know that beneath a very, very shallow depth of soil, there's rock. It's just hard pan, kind of like we have around here. Sometimes it isn't rock, it's clay, but it might as well be rock. You know, have you ever dug down in your yard and after the first couple of inches, man, I remember when we moved into our house down here at the end of Dorian.

You know, we had a guy who was in our fellowship at the time and who moved away, but who built that house for us. And it is, there was no yard, of course, you know, we had to put a yard in. And so we were trying to break up the soil and bless his heart, Skip Weisgerber came over with his tractor to help us. He says, oh, come over, oh, you know, we'll plow up the ground for you. You can play, this is great, you know, go for it.

So he came over with his tractor and he had, you know, this fork thing that he was gonna tear up the ground with so we could, you know, get seed into the ground. And I remember we had this little layer of dust. You know how it is, you walk and it goes poof, you know? And he pulled his tractor thingy, you know, I'm not a farmer, obviously, you could tell, it's a thingy, plow behind, you know, the tractor and it bounced, it bounced on the ground. It would not dig into the, it just went, doom, doom, doom, doom, doom, doom, doom, and he got off his tractor and he's scratching his head.

He says, I have never seen such hard panned ground before. Yeah, it's just, and you know, I don't know how in the world we got grass to grow because we basically planted it in the dust, not dirt, dust, and it grew. And now we have green grass, which is crazy, which I guess probably more of a testimony to what you can do when you put enough chemicals on the ground, I suppose. But anyway, it's kind of the picture of this ground type. There is a little bit of soil, but under that, it's hard, and you'll notice in verse six, it says, when the sun came up, it says in verse six, the plants were scorched.

You know, usually sunshine is vital to the growth of plants. You know, they need sunshine to grow, but sunshine will kill a plant that has no root. If there's no root, there's no depth to the root at all, the sun can

actually kill the thing. Verse seven goes on to describe the next soil type. His other seeds fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

And that's pretty straightforward. The soil of this area, you know, looked good on the surface. So he puts his seed there, but lying in the soil, unbeknownst to the farmer, are the seeds of, you know, weeds that when watered and so forth would produce, you know, after their own kind and strip the nutrients from the ground and actually take it away from what he really wanted to grow there, wouldn't be long before those more aggressive weeds grow up and choke out the tender plants. Isn't it crazy how easy it is to grow weeds? Why doesn't grass grow that easily?

I'd have a beautiful lawn if weeds grew as well, or grass grew as well as weeds. Anyway, then finally, Jesus described the fourth soil type. Look in verse eight. It says, still other seed fell on good soil where it produced a crop 160 or 30 times what was sown. And obviously, you know what that means.

There was, you know, it was good soil. So there's the story. It's a simple story, isn't it? It's a simple farming, agricultural-based story. But what does it mean?

Well, we know again that the soil types refer to heart types. So let's skip down to verse 18. Listen, once again, as Jesus goes through the explanation, we'll talk about it. Verse 18 says, listen to what the parable of the sower means. When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand that the evil one comes, and so that's the picture of the birds, those birds are a symbol of Satan, and snatches away what was sown in their heart.

He says, this is the seed sown along the path. So remember here, this path is hard. So this is hard-packed, concrete-like soil, and it represents what Jesus says is a lack of understanding that results in people not receiving the word at all. And then obviously, Satan is free to snatch it away. It can't have any lasting effect in their lives.

But here's the question that is kind of gnawing at us. Why doesn't this person understand the meaning of the word? I mean, what's standing in the way? Is it because only some of us can understand because only some of us are smart enough? Nah, I don't think that's it.

I mean, you think about that for a little while, I don't think that's it, because, you know, I'm not very bright. So I don't think it's some sort of elite sort of a deal. What is the problem? What is the problem that these people aren't understanding the word of God? Well, remember, what is the condition of this soil?

It's rock-hard, and that gives us a clue right there. The soil is rock-hard, so they don't understand. Paul actually explained this a little bit further when he wrote to the church in Ephesus. Let me put it up on the screen for you. It goes like this from chapter four.

So I tell you, he wrote, and insist on it in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, and that's a term basically for unbelievers, in the futility of their thinking. And then he describes them. He says they are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because, now pay attention here, of the ignorance that is in them. Okay, ignorance, lack of understanding, why? Due to the hardening of their hearts.

So when a person's heart becomes hard, it's shut off from hearing and even understanding the word. They can't understand it because their hearts are hard. Okay, now we have one other question. How does a person get a hard heart? How do you get that?

Are you born with a hard heart? I don't think so, not in the sense that we're talking about here. The answer actually comes from a neat little passage in the book of Hebrews, which I'll put here for you, where the writer says, but encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. See, we got the answer to our question right there. How does a person get a hard heart?

The heart is hardened through sin's deceitfulness, okay? Basically, what's going on here is that living in sin without repentance, without a desire to change has an effect on the heart. It hardens it over time. I don't know if you've ever worked with clay, molding clay, but if you think of the word of God like water, it really is to the human heart what that water is to clay, because if you keep clay away from water, it will harden. It will continue to harden.

But if you keep water on the clay, keep getting it wet, you can mold and remold that clay. And God's doing a work. There's even a scripture in the book of Jeremiah about how he's like a potter in our lives, and he's shaping our lives. And yet, what is going to give him that freedom to be able to shape our hearts and our lives? It's continuing to have the water washing over our heart, accepting it, opening our heart to it, responding to it, keeping ourselves moldable, and so forth.

But I don't know if you've ever seen a demonstration by a potter, but you take a piece of clay and keep it away from water for a period of time, and you drop it, and it'll shatter like glass. It's just this hard, brittle sort of a substance, and so forth. And Jesus is talking here about a person who loves their sin, will not repent, repent, will not change. And a condition of hardness just takes over in their lives, and it literally

robs them of their ability to understand, to grasp, to know about the word of God. And Satan easily comes along at that point and just snatches it away, because their heart produces no environment for the word of God to take root.

The next kind of ground is revealed in verse 20. Look with me there in your Bible. It says, the seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word. Notice that, again, they hear the word. They're in church, or they're reading their Bible, or maybe they're listening to you as you share Christ.

They're hearing. And at once, in fact, they receive it with joy. They're like, whoa, that is great! But since they have no root, they last only a short time. What happens?

Well, he says, when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Right, so the really incredible part about this parable is how it explains to us someone can appear to come to Christ. Have you ever been just befuddled by somebody who responds to the gospel? I know I have. Positively, excitedly, and they're just, you know, they got a big grin on their face and they hear about Jesus, they hear about the gospel, they hear about, you know, what the Bible has to say, and they're like, wow, that is great.

And they're excited for a while. And we're all rejoicing, we're going, yay, you know, so-and-so came to the Lord and we're having a good day. Oh, praise the Lord. And we put out our notes to people. Oh, we got a praise report.

You know, so-and-so came to the Lord, he accepted Jesus and we're just thrilled. And then about a month later, we don't hear from this person anymore, or two months or six months or whatever it might be. They're just, they're gone. They're back in the world doing what they used to do and living the way they used to live and we're all sitting around. What is that all about?

And we're trying to figure it out. And Jesus helps us in this parable to understand what's going on under the surface of things. And that's what happens. This person seems delighted with the things of God. They appear to be doing great, but then a challenge arises.

It's some challenge related to obedience to the Word of God. And instead of applying what they know from the Word, they choose to just, you know, I don't know, get angry, get offended, get bored. Whatever. And they just kind of give up. They just kind of drop off.

And this person is the one we call the shallow hearer, right? By the way, I do have a list of these things. It's good. The first one is the hard-hearted non-hearer because they don't hear the Word of God. They can't hear it.

The second one here is the shallow hearer. And yeah, we'll talk about this in just a little bit more, but let's move on. Verse 22 goes on and says, "'The seed falling among the thorns' refers to someone, again, who hears the Word.'" Notice it says. "'But now what's the problem? Now the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth have a choking effect on the word,' or again, the seed, it can't grow, "'making it then unfruitful.'" So this third soil type is characterized by really a case of double-mindedness because this person is preoccupied with two kingdoms.

They hear the Word of God and they are, they're good with it, you know? But the problem is they've also got the kingdom of the world that they are thinking about. And these people want to know what the Word says. They want to know God. They want to follow God, but they also want what the world is offering at the same time.

They really, truly want God, but they really, truly want the world too. And they worry about the things that they don't have in the world. And it takes a lot of their time and energy and their concern. And wealth is a very, very tempting thing in their lives. They think about money a lot.

And they know they shouldn't. They know that God's Word tells us to be careful about money. They know that God's Word tells us there's all kinds of warnings about money. And they hear that and intellectually, they'll even say, oh, well, money, you know? Money is a big drag, you know?

But in their heart, they want it. They dream about it. They think about what it would be like to win the lottery. Just, you know, be independently wealthy. And they're sometimes thinking of ways that they can make that happen in their lives.

And all that worry and all that concern and all that wanting of the things that the world has to offer ends up having a result of choking the Word, literally choking God's Word in their lives because they're so concerned about other things. You know, Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God, but they're not seeking first the kingdom of God because they're also seeking the kingdom of man. It's not that they're not seeking the kingdom of God. It's that there's a duplicity going on in their lives. You know, you can see some element of the Word of God growing in their lives, but it gets choked.

And as soon as you see something come up, it just gets choked right away to the point where it never bears any fruit, you know? And that's basically what kind of their life is all about. This is the next person

on our list here. This is the double-minded hearer. So you've got the hard-hearted non-hearer, the shallow hearer, who doesn't put the Word of God into practice, and the double-minded hearer who is interested in the things of God, but at the same time, equally interested in the things of the world.

And then we have the last heart condition, verse 23. It says, but the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the Word and understands it. And this is the one who produces a crop, in other words, is fruitful, and it yields maybe even 100%, might not be quite that much, might be like 60 or maybe 30 or so, what was actually sown into their lives. And this is the person who allows the Word of God to take root, it produces fruit, albeit differing levels. Did you notice that here?

Jesus said some people are going to bear more fruit than others. Some people are going to bear more fruit than others, okay? Deal with it. I mean, you might look at somebody's life and you go, wow, I wish I was bearing as much fruit as they did. And that's not necessarily a bad thing, but Jesus said some people are going to bear different levels, amounts of fruit, and so forth.

But you know, there's an interesting thing. Whenever I read through passages like this, I always think to myself, but what is this passage not saying? I mean, what questions am I left with? One of the questions that kind of gnaws at me from this is, what makes the good ground good? We know what makes the bad ground bad.

We saw that. He explained it. Hardness makes the bad ground bad. Shallow soil. And we see that that is a reference to not putting the Word of God into practice in our lives.

It just, the Word sits on the surface of our lives. It never gets down deep, right? So we have a shallow faith and we never bear fruit. And then finally, the worries and concerns of this world and the deceitfulness of wealth. Those, we know what makes the bad soil bad.

But then he just comes along and says, and then some of the seed fell in the good soil. And it's good. And we're all kind of going, great. How is it good? Why is it good?

Well, think about it. It's because it doesn't have those other things. I mean, that's really kind of the understanding. It's not hard. It's been plowed up, right?

It is not shallow. Right? It's not shallow. There's a depth to the soil because this person allows, invites, gives God permission to work in their heart. I mean, deep in their heart.

And they are willing to put that word into practice. Not just let it sit on the surface, but let it get deep. And then lastly, the soil is made good by the fact that they are determined, although it is hard, to make the

kingdom of God the focus of their lives and to let go of the desires of this world and to say, you know what? Oh, I am just so tired of the world yipping and yapping in my ear and telling me what it thinks I should be running after, what it thinks is important to live for and to run after. I am tired of hearing that.

I am not going to follow after those things anymore. I am going to follow the Lord my God because that is the only way there's going to be joy and fruitfulness in my life. And they make a determination that, you know what? I don't care. How many times do you have to drive by the lottery sign before it doesn't bug you anymore?

I mean, you know, again, the world's constantly telling you that the answer to your problem is just having lots of money, you know? And then not, and to make matters worse, you got to drive by the stupid lottery sign every day. Right? And you see the dumb thing. What are we up to?

The high wall's up to 54 million. Yeah. And there's got to be just a decision in your heart and mind to say big hairy deal I don't care. That's not where happiness comes from and I will not run after that. I Will not pattern my life after this world that is being destroyed.

I will not and in so doing I there there there there becomes this this this Hospitable environment for the word to settle in my life To take root to grow and ultimately to to bear fruit. I Need to make a another point here another and this is an important really important point and I I debated on where exactly to bring this in to this to this talk, but we tend to look at the parable of the sower as a Condition of the heart that basically kind of characterizes the person's life, you know, you you look around at people you kind of think Okay, which soil are you? You know and you think of the yeah, I'm sure many of you probably already here today You've been thinking of people you've been thinking of yourself. You've been thinking of others and thought oh, yeah, uncle Jack Hard soil, you know, and then you got aunt Bonnie, you know, and she's the Shallow rocky thing and then you know uncle Tom. Yeah, he's the thorny Cares about the world and getting rich and always talking about having enough money You know as there's a and and you know You do that and you tend to kind of characterize people Based on these different soil types or heart conditions of the heart and think that that's kind of what characterizes their life Here's something the Lord's been showing me Frankly much to my chagrin through this study of this passage that these things are not just characterizations of a person's life But they are things that can actually creep in To our lives even as Christians and that's the kind of the unnerving part of this whole scenario because see as Christians There's some part of our lives where we have truly There's been some good soil, you know I mean, we've let the Word of God come into our hearts to the point where we embrace the gospel We've opened our hearts to Jesus and there's really truly good things going on But that doesn't mean that at some

point along the path some point along the journey We can't be open to some of these other variations that really truly can creep into our lives for example Even as a born-again Christian, I know that my sins are forgiven You know and and on and on But all of us any of us can toy with sin to the part to the point where we begin to experience Some hardening And Did you notice when I read that passage earlier about hardening of the heart Did anybody think to yourself when we were reading that wait a minute that's written to believers When when Paul said don't live like the Gentiles Don't live that way Who are being hardened because of sins deceitfulness don't let that happen to you Do you know what he meant by that?

It can happen to you That's what he meant by that and that's the part about this that can be a little bit frightening But it's important for you and I to know nonetheless This can happen to me these heart these conditions of the heart Which can become inhospitable to the reception of God's Word can happen in me and you I can be Hardened I can allow sin to have freedom in my life to the point where it gets hard to hear the word in some respects or maybe to about some things in my life or as a believer I can refuse to put the Word of God into practice in certain areas of my life and I can become shallow in Those areas have you ever met Christians who have seemed to have a depth of of growth in this area, but over here Nothing no growth You know they they know the word. They're great. Maybe There's this gift of evangelism that you can see or maybe there's other another gift over here That's just wow you look at their life, and you're like wow the fruit of God is so great here But the marriage stinks I Mean just won't put the Word of God into practice in their marriage, or maybe their marriage is okay, but their parenting is Awful they're just not applying the Word of God as it relates to that particular area of their life Just not doing it not putting it into practice you see you and I what I'm saying is we can Compartmentalize our lives to some degree in the sense that we can be a believer who has areas of our lives that are suffering from An inability to receive the word for some reason whether it's hardness whether it's shallowness Whether it's thorniness in that particular area of our heart because you know I'm doing good over here But I'm worried and sick to death about you know what's gonna happen over here, and I'm so worried and so tied in knots Over what might happen or this or that that the over here the Word of God just isn't growing. It's being choked in my life you know I had to really kind of take inventory of my own heart as I studied through this passage and just Had to say Jesus Forgive me Because I recognize I recognize in my life where I have allowed Some of these heart conditions to take hold in the midst of my walk with Jesus And you know what it has it has kept my fruitfulness held back, and I see it And I have determined in my heart my life. I'm gonna make it a point of prayer And say Jesus first of all I repent and Second of all I don't want things to be choking out your word and Making my heart my life less fruitful than it could be Because I know like we talked about last week some someday.

I'm gonna stand before God. He's gonna say What did you do with what I gave you? Were you fruitful? Have you ever stopped to think what what's your percentage of fruitfulness? 100% 60% 30% I don't think those are the only ones 10% 5% 1% Have you ever thought about it now obviously you and I don't know for sure But if you ask the Lord he might give you an idea Lord where am I?

How could I be more fruitful? If I allowed my heart a greater freedom to let your word Take root grow and so forth could I be more fruitful for the kingdom? I want to be more fruitful don't you don't you want to stand before the Lord and hear those words one day well done Good and faithful servant you were fruitful. I gave you this and you produced much Don't you want to hear that I want to hear that Well what's the key to hearing that Good soil The words always good the seed there's nothing wrong with the seed No problem there It's where the seed goes. It's what it gets into parents You know what we need to be thinking about these soil types as it relates to our children Do you ever think about that with your kids?

What kind of a soil type your kids have? Is it hard? Is it shallow? Is it thorny? Or is it good and What can you do prayerfully to encourage that soil type in their lives Things to be thinking about amen You